Annual Report upon the Africans for the year ending April 1846.

The movement made in any great moral revolution within any limited period, is often so vague and indeterminate, that we can hardly tell whether it has been progressive or retrograde. When this revolution is against deep rooted prejudice and institutions established by law, it is perhaps neither to be expected nor desirable, that we should emerge at once from darkness into day. The gray dawn, and the reddening streak must first come before the rising sun. It might at first sight seem that we should immediately recognise the fact that God hath made of one blood all nations and that no one has a right to buy and sell and hold as property his brother man. But these great and plain truths are not yet above the horizon, neither are they in thick darkness, and we do believe they are coming gradually into view.

We would say that the advancement of these truths, and of 3,000,000 Africans in our country (for they are practically nearly correlative terms) has during the past year been entirely and rapidly onward, even if it not that our national legislature has in that period voluntarily enlarged and strengthened the limits not of human freedom, but of human bondage and slavery. Whether the direct and with some the avowed ~~fact~~ tendency of this vote will be suffered to take effect, or be overruled by a kind Providence for the removal of slavery is yet doubtful. We may safely say however that the leaven of truth has been working too long on this subject for slavery to derive any permanent advantage from this extension of territory.

In order to gain a more distinct view of the condition of the colored population in our own country we may divide them two classes— the free Blacks in the non-slave holding States, and the slave population of the Southern States.

First. The Free Blacks. Their present condition is one of transition from bondage to an equality with their fellow men. They still suffer under many disabilities arising from their color. They are cut off from the advantages of most of our schools and colleges. They are not permitted to exercise the elective franchise except with a property qualification to atone for the crime of being black. And at every effort to elevate themselves above the rank of hewers of wood and drawers of water, they are frowned upon by some, or regarded with distrust and indifference by others. Some, however begin to look over this wall of prejudice, and have begun to lay hands on it to tear it down. They begin to feel that the degradation of the African race is not owing to any natural inferiority; But that whatever of evil they suffer in their present state, whatever of prejudice exists against them keeping them from their just rights, in society, in the Church and in the State, is owing to the fact that they have once been slaves, and that their brethren are still in bondage. A prejudice so unjust which makes the fact that this people have once been oppressed and degraded, a reason why they should still wear the yoke and be branded with infamy, cannot long have a place on our statute books, or a lodging in the hearts of honest men.

To some extent this prejudice has been removed at last so

far as the outward manifestation of it is concerned. Maine Vermont and Massachusetts (and I believe R.I.) no longer require the property qualification from the colored man; and we hope the same for New York. The efforts that are made for the improvement and elevation of the race also shew a diminution of this prejudice. During the past year, this matter has attracted considerable attention. It has been discussed whether seperate systematic effort, should be made for them in the way of establishment of schools &c. It is doubtful whether such a plan would be beneficial if attempted. But the interest taken in these subjects by some of the first in Church and State, and by the religious and secular press is indicative of good.

But the colored people themselves, are far from being passive in this scene. They know that if they enjoy any advantages of education, any rights of property, any hopes of future advancement, besides the inestimable value of the cause itself it is owing to the fact that they are free. It has indeed been charged upon them, that they are in a worse condition than those still in bondage. This charge was repeated by Mr. Calhoun when secretary of State in a letter to Mr. Pakenham. He says. In the states which have changed their former relation (meaning the free states) the African race has sunk into vice and pauperism. He attempts to shew this by the late census, that deafness, blindness and insanity are more frequent than in the slave states. By a memorial presented by the colored persons of the city and Co. of N.Y. to the senate of the U. S.

in answer to this charge, it is shewn that in a number of towns in the free states, where there is not a single colored inhabitant, there are reported by the census— 186 insane, 38 blind and 36 deaf & dumb. The same memorial also states that the proportion of colored adults who cannot read and write are only 1 in 108. and that to a population of 170,000. free colored persons of the free States, there are 323 evangelical churches, or an average of one church to every 323 colored inhabitants.

In fact considering the prejudices they have to contend with, the fact that they are disfranchised in most of the states, and deprived of many of the privileges which the whites enjoy, it is much to their credit, that there is among them so much intelligence and virtue.

The most encouraging feature as it regards their progress is the fact, that they are exerting themselves in their own advancement. In 1844 there were in the free states, 16 colored literary societies, with libraries varying from 100 to 1400 volumes; and 119 benevolent societies. And there were one semi-monthly and three weekly papers edited by colored men and devoted to their interests. Most of their ministers and teachers are of their own color. In some of the states they have held conventions to take into view their own condition, and the means of benefitting their race. In New York these conventions have been held yearly. And in that state they have lately sent forth an address to the voters in view of the convention to be held in June of this year for the alteration of the constitution, requesting that they be admitted to the right of suffrage on the same grounds with the whites.

The general facts to be gathered from the present condition

of the colored population of the free states are — that they are still in the infancy of their freedom, that though cut off from many of their just rights by law and prejudice, they have still made much and commendable progress; and that they are awake to their own condition; and are putting forth exertions for their own improvement which shew that they appreciate and are capable of enjoying in their highest and fullest extent the blessings of liberty.

We now come to consider the condition of the slaves. We will first mention some facts which have a general bearing upon their welfare. The admission of Texas has already been referred to. The laws passed by the legislatures of Miss. and Ala. during their late sessions deserve a passing notice. The essential feature of these laws is to prevent the importation of slaves within their respective territories, either by resident or non-resident planters: and in one of the states settlers are not allowed to bring their slaves with them. They have found that the tide of slave population is rolling to the Southwest and that the slaves are becoming too numerous either for the prosperity or safety of the whites. The effect of the laws will be to close the market in the South west and a consequent depreciation in the value of this kind of property in the more northern of the slave-holding states. The question will then come home with an emphasis which cannot be eluded or unanswered — what shall we do with this people for they are "more and mightier than we"?

(See the close of the report.)

Another fact having its general bearing on the welfare of the slave, is the discussion of the question of Emancipation. Much of this is open and free, and carried on by the public prints. An effort has indeed been made to fetter one tongue, but a thousand more will in consequence of that gross injustice be looked for the cause of freedom. And this is a question that is discussed more in the hearts of men, than appears on the surface. It does not come up so much as an abstract question of right, but it is interwoven with every other question. Do they propose a system of common schools? It is seen to be impracticable from the sparsity of their population. And whence does this arise? The necessary but involuntary answer is — from slavery. Would they encourage immigration of free whites from other states? Slavery keeps them north of the Ohio. Would they encourage agriculture? Slavery has sucked every green spot, and verdant field of its moisture. And bleak hills and arid wastes, and stinted pines tell that the curse of heaven has followed the iniquity of man. It is upon questions like these, that the question of Emancipation continually comes up.

As to the slaves themselves, we will first notice some efforts which have been made in behalf of their religious instruction. This subject has attracted the attention, and in some measure the action of all denominations at the South. An interesting meeting was held in Charleston last May, for the express purpose of taking this subject into consideration. There were present representatives from the Episcopal, Presbyterian Baptist, Methodist and Lutheran Churches. The influence of

This meeting was confined more especially to South Carolina and Georgia; where in fact this work has been carried on most efficiently. Some facts were however collected from the other States. We will give a brief sketch of what each denomination is doing in this work.

In the Episcopal Church. Bishop Meade of Va, with his assistant Dr Johns are directing their attention to this work. In S. C. several clergymen are ~~directing their attention to this work~~ acting as missionaries, who are wholly given to the work, and some catechists; while almost the entire body of the clergy, are in their respective parishes to a greater or less extent engaged in it. Bishop Elliot of Ga. also gives encouragement to the work. His plan is to incorporate negroes and whites as one charge, and bring the children and youth into efficient Sabbath Schools.

The Methodist E. Church 'has advanced' says the report, 'above all others in direct and well sustained efforts in the colored field'. The present number of colored communicants in the slave-holding states cannot be less than 160,000. Besides the attention paid by travelling and local preachers to the negroes. there are between 80 & 90 missionaries who have under their charge over 18,000 church members, and 100,000 attendants on their services. Over 1,000 negroes are in connection with their church in Texas. The S. C. conference has 16 missions to the negroes: Ga. conference 12: Tn. 3; ala, 7: Memphis 9; ark 1; Miss. 7: N. C. 2: Virg. 2. 4,380 children are catechised in the missions of the S. C. conference and the expense of these missions is over $11,000 annually.

The proportion of colored to white members in the Baptist Church

is greater than in the Methodist. Though the Methodist may have in the aggregate the greater number. By a late return the estimate of members is 700.000; of this number one seventh or 100.000 may be set down as colored. Many of the ministers devote a part of their time to the negroes; we do not know the exact number of Missionaries devoted exclusively to them. There are more colored licensed ministers, and more colored churches regularly organized in this, than in any, or in all other denominations put together. Some Associations are actively engaged in this work. The Sunbury Association on the sea board of Ga. employs 2 white missionaries, has 4.444 colored members to 495 white. 7 colored churches 4 ordained colored ministers, and one or more licensed. Of the 65.000 members in Ga, 45.000 are negroes. (So says the committee, but it may be a mistake for 15.000) At the convention in Augusta Ga. made up of delegates from all the slave states, for the purpose of seperating from the Northern portion of the Church, very special mention was made of the Negroes of the South as a field for missionary labor and claiming the attention of the Church in its new organization.

In the Presbyterian Church the committe says that the movement in favor of the religious instruction of the negroes, for the last ten years has been gradual, and for the two years past rapid and extensive. In all the States there are a number of ministers who devote a considerable portion of their time to the negroes; some acting as missionaries; while the number of missionaries is increasing. The three features in their manner of prosecuting the work are 1st To unite masters and servants as one charge. 2d To establish Sabbath-Schools and classes of instruction for children and youth, and also for adults,

and to encourage instruction in families. And 3d to open the field as fast and as far as possible to missionaries duly qualified and employed.' As to the number of colored church members the committee do not state. They are known however to be ~~small~~ very few. The Church itself being small especially in the more Southern States.

In regard to the extent of this instruction, we may make some calculation. The Baptists reckon 100,000 colored members. The Methodists 160,000, and allowing all other denominations 100,000. which is a large estimate, and considering the number of hearers to be five times as many which is the proportion in the Methodist missions — we have remaining the proportion of 6 to every 8. or 1,100,000 who are without the hearing, and of whom it may almost be said they never hear the word. This appalling fact is strengthened by the declaration from a pulpit in S.C. one of the States best supplied with religious instruction that there were in that state 150,000 negroes as much heathen as if they lived in the middle of Africa. While then we rejoice with heartfelt gratitude that something has been done, and that Christians are awake to do more for the religious instruction of the slave; yet they come very far short even in extent of their work. They have hardly touched much less cultivated more than half of the field.

As to the kind of instruction it is well known that it is oral and by consequence in a great measure defective. Few access to the scriptures they do not have. And much of the preaching fails of its object. With the educated it fails because it is beyond the understanding and with the uneducated, because addressed to the animal feelings. Yet the effect of this religious instruction so far as it has been carried out, has been very good on both master and slave. In order to make

this instruction what it should be, the Bible should be given to the slave and sufficient mental culture for him to appreciate its truths. Such a step would prepare them to be men and to assert the rights of men, and they need nothing else to make them Christians.

The condition of the slaves otherwise than it is affected by this religious instruction is one of hopeless and unjust servitude. This is the only thing that has been done to fit them for emancipation. And in justice to many we must say that this idea is at the farthest possible remove from their thoughts. The slaves are still left to the tender mercies of a system, which in the language of a Synod of Kentucky, "exhibits power without responsibility, toil without recompense, life without liberty, law without justice, wrongs without redress, infamy without crime, punishment without guilt and families without marriage — a system which will not only make victims of the present unhappy generation, inflicting upon them the degradation, the contempt, the captivity, and the anguish of hopeless oppression, but which even aims at transmitting this heritage of misery and woe to their children, and their children's children down to their latest posterity." (Presb. Sy. of Kent. 1833).

We now turn from our own country to the condition of Africans elsewhere so far as they properly come within the limits of this report.

In Aug. 1838. 800,000 human beings were freed from slavery in the British West Indies. As the reports which have reached us are somewhat contradictory, we will quote what Lord Stanley, when colonial secretary said to the Spanish minister.

He says "It will be found that since the emancipation the negroes have been thriving and contented; that they have raised

their manner of living, and multiplied their comforts and enjoyments: that their offences against the laws have become more and more light and unfrequent; that their morals have improved, that marriage has been more and more substituted for concubinage; and that they are eager for ~~emancipation~~ education, rapidly advancing in knowledge, and powerfully influenced by the ministers of religion." Such are the benefits of West India emancipation.

The colony of Liberia, and the efforts of the colonization society also deserve notice. The society is out of debt, and donations of $20,000 have been received, which were desired to complete the purchase of the entire coast between Cape Mount and Cape Palmas a distance of 300 miles. They have in Liberia 11 settlements. The population in all 2,390. Most of these are liberated slaves illiterate, and not in the habit of providing for themselves. They have however improved ~~made~~ very much in their condition both physically and mentally. They have begun to feel and act as if they were men. They have schools established and education is making considerable progress. Religion has also prospered much. The Methodists have recently sent out a large reinforcement to the colony. We are also gratified to learn that preparations are making, which will probably soon be accomplished for ~~making~~ constituting Liberia an established sovereignty.

The rest of Africa properly belongs to another committee except so far as it is connected with the slave trade. This infamous traffic still continues, and probably will

so long as that inquitous system of which it is the result furnishes a market. An Officer on board the British Squadron on the west coast of Africa, writes to the London Times, "Here we are on the most miserable station in the wide world attempting an impossibility— the suppression of the Slave-trade. We look upon the whole affair out here as a complete humbug. You may make treaties in London, and send out the whole combined squadrons of England and France to this coast and then you will not have affected your object. So long as a slave worth only a few dollars here, fetches 80£ or 100£ in America men and means will be found to evade the strictest blockade." The absurdity of blockading a coast two thousand miles in extent must be evident to the meanest capacity. He states however, that at the spot which they were then blockading about 3.000 slaves had been collected by the agents for exportation, but the difficulties to get them away had been so great, that few had been known to have been shipped for the last twelve months.

Within three weeks, three vessels have arrived in our own ports as prizes to the American squadron for having engaged in the slaver trade. One of these the Ports of Philadelphia of up than 350 tons burthen had 900 slaves packed in its narrow holds. In 14 days after its capture 150 of these had died. And when arrived at Liberia its decks and holds presented a scene of suffering and misery never paralleled except in the history of this traffic

in men. There were the dead in heaps: and the dying gasping for a little more suffocating breath. Some lay their ulcerated sides on the hard deck; and others having a little more strength strangled their fellows in the struggle for an inch of room or a puff of betid air. Such are the tragical horrors which are continually repeated on the coast of Africa.

In conclusion we may say of the African race. That though degraded at home, and despised abroad, yet whenever they have been permitted to breathe the free air and enjoy the pure light of the Gospel, they have been found fully equal to all the privileges which have ever been granted them.

Joseph K. Wight Reporter.

I find the statements made on the 3d page of the report, with respect to the laws regulating the domestic slave trade in Miss. & Ala. are not strictly true. The law in Miss. was incorporated some years ago in the constitution of the State of ~~Miss~~ Miss. but only took effect this year. With respect to Alab. though the passage of such a law was currently reported it may have arisen from the fact that it was strongly recommended by the committee appointed to report on the subject. J. K. W.

At the reading of the above report in the Society of Inquiry the following resolution was passed.

"Resolved. That in adopting this report, the Society express no opinion on the subject of slavery in the abstract; and that this resolution be inserted in the report."